

LESSON 1 • SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

THE PREEMINENT CHRIST

Colossians 1:1–29

KEY VERSE

“That in all things he might have the preeminence.” — Colossians 1:18 KJV

LESSON AIMS

As a result of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Understand the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ
- Recognize how Christ’s position should shape the way we think and live
- Respond to life’s difficulties with greater faith, endurance, and gratitude

KEY TERMS

Preeminence – The highest rank, supreme position, or unrivaled standing. Paul is declaring that Christ stands above all things.

Firstborn – A term that can refer to birth order but can also communicate rank, status, or inheritance. In Colossians 1, the context emphasizes Christ’s supremacy over creation.

INTRODUCTION

We all have ideas about what is important and what deserves our attention. When two important things compete, we have to decide which one carries greater weight. That is not only true in our personal lives but it is also true spiritually. The Christian faith makes an enormous claim about Jesus Christ and that is that Jesus is not simply one important part of Christianity. He is not only the One who forgives our sins while we remain in charge of everything else. He is supreme. That is the central point Paul is making to the church at Colossae who were living in a world filled with competing religious ideas. While they had heard the Gospel and accepted Christ they were also being exposed to teaching that emphasized other spiritual practices, human traditions, religious regulations, visions, ascetic practices, and spiritual beings. Paul’s concern was that through this they would begin to believe that Christ is important, but perhaps Christ is not enough. Paul answers that idea by taking them back to Christ Himself, that they may know who He is, who He was, and who He has always been. Paul’s argument is essentially that once you understand who Christ is, you cannot treat Him as merely one part of your life. He must have preeminence.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1. A Church That Is Growing (Colossians 1:1–8)

Paul begins by identifying himself and Timothy and addressing the believers in Colossae. He then gives thanks for them.

COLOSSIANS 1:3–5

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

Paul has heard about three things: their faith in Christ, their love for God's people, and their hope. These are important because Christian faith is never intended to remain merely an idea in someone's head. Faith in Christ affects our relationships, hope affects our endurance, and the gospel produces fruit.

Paul says in verse 6 that the gospel is "bringing forth fruit" among them. Paul's message here is that the Gospel is meant to produce something in us. Our maturity in Christ is not measured by how much information we can explain. But it is seen in what the truth produces in our lives.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some changes that should become visible when a person genuinely places their trusts in Christ?

2. Knowing God's Will and Living It (Colossians 1:9–14)

Paul tells them what he has been praying for.

COLOSSIANS 1:9

We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Paul wants God's will to occupy their understanding so thoroughly that it begins to shape their judgment.

COLOSSIANS 1:10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Paul's order is this: Knowledge → walk → fruit. If knowledge of God stops at simply what I know but now what I do it will not produce fruit. Biblical knowledge is supposed to change our behavior. Knowing what God says about forgiveness should affect how we treat someone who has wronged us. Knowing that God is sovereign should affect how we handle circumstances we cannot control.

COLOSSIANS 1:11

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Paul associates spiritual strength with patience, joy, and endurance. We sometimes think spiritual strength means having enough power to make difficult circumstances disappear. Paul describes spiritual strength as having God's power to remain faithful in difficult circumstances.

DOES MY WALK MATCH MY KNOWLEDGE?

Consider these situations. There is always a Godly response and then a competing response to living a Godly life. When we recognize the preeminence and the supremacy of Christ we daily choose the truth of who Christ is over competing response consistent with our sinful nature.

Scenario 1 — Workplace Conflict

Someone speaks disrespectfully to you at work.

Truth:	Christ is Lord.
Competing response:	I need to get even.
Worthy walk:	Respond truthfully and respectfully without retaliating.
Fruit:	Patience and self-control.

Scenario 2 — Family Tension

A family member disappoints you.

Truth:	Christ calls me to walk worthy of Him.
Competing response:	Withdrawal, bitterness, or retaliation.
Worthy walk:	Address the problem honestly without allowing anger to control the relationship.
Fruit:	Patience and love.

Scenario 3 — Financial Pressure

You have an opportunity to make money by compromising a conviction.

Truth:	Christ is Lord over all things.
Competing response:	I cannot afford to obey God.
Worthy walk:	Trust Christ enough to refuse what violates His authority.
Fruit:	Faithfulness.

Scenario 4 — Disappointment

Something you prayed about does not happen.

Truth:	Christ remains Lord even when circumstances disappoint me.
Competing response:	God must not care.
Worthy walk:	Bring the disappointment honestly to God while continuing to trust Him.
Fruit:	Endurance.

Scenario 5 — Temptation to Compromise

You are tempted to do something you know is wrong because everyone around you considers it normal.

Truth:	My life belongs to Christ.
Competing response:	Everyone else does it.
Worthy walk:	Remain faithful even when obedience costs something.
Fruit:	Faithfulness.

3. Paul Takes Us to the Center: Who Is Jesus? (Colossians 1:15–20)

Now Paul moves from prayer into one of the greatest descriptions of Christ in the New Testament.

COLOSSIANS 1:15

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

Paul begins by telling us that Christ is the image of the invisible God. Scripture presents God as beyond ordinary human sight. Through the incarnation Christ makes God known and visible. Paul is not saying that Jesus is a picture or a copy of God, He is saying that Christ is the invisible God made known to us. When we see the compassion of Christ in the Scripture we are seeing the visible manifestation of the character of God. When we see Christ welcome sinners who come to Him in repentance and faith, we are seeing the mercy of God. Christ is the corrective to our distorted ideas about God.

The Firstborn of Every Creature

“Firstborn” does not mean the first thing created. The Greek word *prōtotokos* can communicate birth order, but Scripture also uses the concept of firstborn language to describe rank, privilege, inheritance, and supremacy. The context in Colossians is decisive.

Paul immediately explains what he means:

VERSE 16

For by him were all things created.

He describes things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.

And then Paul says all things were created by him, and for him. Paul’s point is that creation itself stands under Christ’s authority, for Christ purposes, unto the glory of God. He is supreme over creation.

Preeminence vs. Priority

Paul is not merely saying give Jesus the number one spot on your priority list. Preeminence means supremacy, priority, and the highest standing. The context of which Paul writes is that everything on our “list” is for Him. So to simply place Him as priority causes the tendency to leave Him out of some stuff but when He is seen as preeminent it means there is no place of my life, He does not exist or have total control because all I am, all I will become, all I have is by Him and for Him. This means that the entirety of my life exists in relation to Christ. Preeminence means there is no compartment of life where Christ ceases to be Lord.

By Him and For Him

Paul says everything was created by Christ, through Christ and for Christ. That includes us. We were not created merely to build a comfortable life. Our lives have a purpose beyond ourselves.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Since my life was created for Christ, how should that change the way I understand what my life is actually for?

By Him All Things Are Held Together

Paul says:

By him all things are held together.

Christ is not simply the One through whom creation began. He remains Lord and sovereign over creation.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is a religious group called Deists who believe that God simply created the Cosmos and then took His hand off it. Paul directly refuses this with the reality that not only has everything been created by Him, for Him, and through Him; but He sustains that which He has created. It is not sustained or able to survive without Him holding it together.

4. Christ and His Church (Colossians 1:18)

COLOSSIANS 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church.

The church belongs to Christ. That means the church does not exist to reflect the personality of its pastor or to satisfy the member's preferences. It does not exist to preserve one generation's traditions at all costs. Christ is the head. Therefore, the church must continually ask what the will of Christ is concerning His church. And then we are called to be the living stones that He builds His church. If Christ is supreme, then our personal preferences cannot become more important than Christ's commands. We can disagree without treating one another as enemies. We can have different personalities without dividing the body. We can hold different preferences without making those preferences the standard of Christian faithfulness.

5. The One Who Is Supreme Is the One Who Reconciles (Colossians 1:19–23)

Paul moves from Christ's supremacy to Christ's work of salvation.

COLOSSIANS 1:19–20

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.

The Christ who stands above creation is the Christ who went to the cross. Paul connects Christ's greatness with His saving work. The cross is not a contradiction of Christ's supremacy but it is a revelation of His supremacy. Jesus possesses supreme authority, yet He willingly gives Himself to reconcile sinners to God.

All Fullness

Paul says:

In him should all fullness dwell.

The Greek word plērōma refers to fullness or completeness. In this context Paul is emphasizing the fullness that belongs in Christ. He develops the idea further in chapter 2, where he says that the fullness of deity dwells in Christ bodily. The Colossians therefore do not need Christ plus something else to become spiritually complete. If Christ is supreme and the fullness of God dwells in Him, then looking elsewhere for spiritual completeness is unnecessary and ultimately misleading.

Reconciliation Through the Cross

Paul says Christ made peace through the blood of his cross. The Gospel is that Christ dealt with the problem of sin. Paul reminds these believers where they came from.

COLOSSIANS 1:21
And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

There was a before and there is a now. Before Christ we were alienated, enemies, separated from God. But now through Christ we are reconciled, forgiven, redeemed, and brought into peace with God. And because of Christ we are called to continue in the faith and be grounded therein.

BEFORE CHRIST / IN CHRIST / BECAUSE OF CHRIST

BEFORE CHRIST	IN CHRIST	BECAUSE OF CHRIST
What characterized us? <i>Colossians 1:21</i> Alienation Enmity Sinful conduct	What has God accomplished? <i>Colossians 1:13–14, 20–22</i> Delivered from darkness Transferred into Christ’s kingdom Redemption Forgiveness Reconciliation Peace with God	How should we live? <i>Colossians 1:10–12, 23</i> Walk worthy Bear fruit Grow Endure Give thanks Remain grounded in the gospel

6. Continue in the Faith (Colossians 1:23)

COLOSSIANS 1:23
If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

Be careful, Mt. Sinai. This verse does not teach that you must earn God’s acceptance by your performance. But neither does it teach that perseverance does not matter. Paul expects believers to remain rooted in the gospel. Our Christian faith is not merely about how we begin but we are called to continue. There will be seasons when faith feels strong and there will also be seasons when faith is tested. The answer is not to abandon Christ because circumstances are difficult. The answer is to become more deeply grounded and settled in the Christ.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What kinds of circumstances can tempt a Christian to move away from continuing in the faith?

7. Paul's Suffering and the Work of Ministry (Colossians 1:24–29)**COLOSSIANS 1:24-26**

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed in his saints.

Paul here is describing his own participation in the suffering that accompanies ministry for Christ. Paul suffers because he is carrying the gospel. His suffering is connected with serving the church and proclaiming Christ.

This gives us an important lesson that faithfulness does not guarantee an easy life. Paul was doing God's work and suffering, but his suffering did not mean God had abandoned him.

Paul's Goal: Maturity**COLOSSIANS 1:28**

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Paul's goal is not merely that people become informed but that they become mature in Christ. Christian maturity involves more than knowing Bible facts.

It includes:

- growing in wisdom
- developing endurance
- becoming more Christlike
- remaining faithful
- responding differently to difficulty
- allowing Christ's truth to shape our conduct

VERSE 29

Striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Paul knows that he cannot accomplish being Christ-like through human strength alone. The text indicates that God works but Paul must partner with what God is doing in his life as must we. Christian maturity involves faithful effort and subsequent dependence upon God's power.

What might compete with Christ's supremacy in your life?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul does not begin by telling the Colossians to become better Christians, he begins by showing them Christ. Paul makes the following statements about Christ:

- Christ is the image of the invisible God
- Christ is before all things
- All things were created through Him and for Him.
- He holds all things together.
- He is the head of the church.
- He reconciles sinners through His cross.
- He is the hope of glory.
- He has the preeminence.

That truth gives Christian living its foundation. We do not obey Christ in order to make Him supreme. He is already supreme. We obey because we have come to recognize who He is. We pursue maturity because Christ is at work in us. We give thanks because salvation begins with what God has done, not what we have accomplished. When something in our lives begins demanding an authority that belongs to Christ, Colossians 1 brings us back to reality that Christ is not merely part of the picture. He stands above it and it is because of Him and for Him that we exist and have what we have.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You for Jesus Christ.

Thank You that He is the image of the invisible God, that all things were created through Him and for Him, and that He is the head of the church. Forgive us for the times we allow our fears, desires, possessions, relationships, success, or opinions to have an authority they were never meant to have. Give us wisdom to know Your will and strength to walk worthy of Christ. Help us remain grounded when circumstances are difficult. Give us patience when answers do not come quickly. Give us gratitude for what You have already done. And teach us to live in a way that recognizes the supremacy of Christ in every area of our lives.

In Jesus' name, Amen.